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CITATION:

Imai, Yasutaka. On the Historical Development of Use(d) to from 1601 to 1800:Using the OED as a Corpus. Zephyr 2014, 26: 38-57

ISSUE DATE:

2014-03-31

URL:

https://doi.org/10.14989/189396

On the Historical Development of *Use(d) to* from 1601 to 1800: Using the *OED* as a Corpus

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1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore the 17th- and 18th-century development of the marginal modal *used to* in the quotation database of the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED2*) on CD-ROM. This loanword from French was used with no restrictions as a lexical verb in the Middle English period; however, in Present-day English, this verb in the habitual meaning is generally considered as an auxiliary verb, whose pronunciation is contracted as [ˈju:stu:], while, in other senses, the consonants in *use(d)* is still voiced. The current usage is adequately dealt with in many handbooks of the English language, and the history of its development is well described in the previous studies. However, corpus linguistics has not yet thoroughly investigated the historical development of *use(d) to*. The present paper, therefore, offers an investigation into the development of *use(d) to* from 1601 to 1800 in order to make a contribution to a full detailed description of its history.

2. Previous Studies

According to *OED2* ("use v."), the English verb *use* derives from the "OF. *user* (also F.), *useir*, *usser*, *uiser*, etc. (= Sp. and Pg. *usar*, It. *usare*, med.L. *ūsāre*)". However, as for the habitual sense of the verb, Matsumoto (2008: 171) suggests the possibility of the influence of the other Old French lexical items: the adjective and substantive masculine *usagier*, which denotes 'customary (thing)', and the adjective *usagié*, whose meaning is 'accustomed,

used (to); usual, customary, in use'. Still, the latest edition of the *OED* (*OED3*) ("use, v.") says that the Old French verb *user* came to mean 'to become familiar with (something) through habit, (with infinitive) to be accustomed to' since the second half of the 12th century. The earliest citation in *OED2* ("use, v.") is from the first decade of the 14th century, shown in (1).

(1) For ryche men vse comunly Sweryn [*v.r.* to swere] grete oþys grysly. (1303 R. Brunne, *Handl. Synne* 691 qtd. in *OED2*, "use v.", Def. 21a. α.).

The habitual sense, '[t]o be accustomed or wont to do something', according to *OED2* ("use v.", Def. 21a.), came into very frequent use from about 1400. The *Middle English Dictionary* ("usen", Def. 14a. [b]), with 23 quotations, many of which are from the 15th century, ensures that *usen* in Middle English means 'with inf. preceded by verbal particle: to be accustomed (to do sth.), be wont; …'. According to Visser (1969: 1411, 1413), in writing, *use(d) to* began to be predicated of things, in both the present and preterite tense in the 16th century. *OED2* ("use v.", Def. 21b.) further observes that our verb in the habitual meaning was frequently predicated of things from about 1620 to about 1675.

As for the verb in the present tense, accounts differ among several scholars. Trnka (1930: 36) explains that by the first half of the 17th century, *use(d) to* came to be restricted "to expressing the preterite only". However, Strang (1970: 150) maintains that the habitual verb *use* in the present tense "was current till the early 18c". Franz (1909: 497) has another opinion that the present form was still usual in the 17th and 18th centuries. According to Visser (1969: 1411), "[i]n the course of the 18th century the construction with *use* in the present tense became obsolescent", although he quoted a 20th-century

example of the present tense, which occurs without infinitive, shown in (2). *OED2* ("use v.", Def. 21) lists sentences of the present form no later than 1726, as shown in (3). However, our verb "not referring to past actions", *OED3* ("use v.", Def. 21a.) observes, was "[o]bsolete in standard British and American English by the 19th century" and is now used in Caribbean English, "chiefly in Trinidad and Tobago", as in (4). Denison (1998: 175) found the latest citation in the quotation database of *OED2*, shown in (5).

(2) All this time, of course, they went on talking agreeably, as people of birth use, about the Queen's temper and the Prince Minister's gout. (1928 Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* [London 1928] Ch. 4, p. 187 qtd. in Visser 1969: 1411).

(3) In that Season of the Year when the Water uses to be lowest. (1726 Leoni, *Designs* 5 b qtd. in *OED2*, "use v.", Def. 21b.).

(4) How she uses to dress when going to praise. (1959 in L. Winer, *Dict. Eng./Creole Trinidad & Tobago* [2009] 929/1 qtd. in *OED3*, "use v.", Def. 21a. [a] α.).

(5) The flat side [of the lute], where we use to carve a rose, or a rundle, to let the sound go inward. (a1843 Southey, *Comm.-pl. Bk.* Ser. ii. [1849] 474 qtd. in *OED2*, "rundle 1", Def. 1a.; Denison 1998: 175).

The perfect and pluperfect forms, Strang (1970: 150) observes, started to be used at the end of the 16th century along with the past form. According to *OED3* ("use v.", Def. 21c. [a]), the perfect form was common in the 16th and 17th centuries, although the pluperfect is now preferred.

As for the present-day usage, numerous contemporary scholars such as Biber *et al.* (1999: 182-183), Declerck (1991: 416-418), Denison (1998: 175-

176), Krusinga (1931: 439-441), Leech and Svartvik (1994: 73), Poutsma (1928: 84-85), Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 42-43), Quirk *et al.* (1985: 140), Swan (1980: sec. 637), Traugott (1972: 44-45), Trudgill and Hannah (1982: 59), Visser (1969: 1410-1423), Weiner and Delahunty (1994: 225), Zandvoort (1962: 84-85) and others refer to the iterative aspect marker *use(d) to*. Austin (2002), Binnick (2005, 2006), Jørgensen (1988), and Tagliamonte and Lawrence (2000) also discuss the usage of *use(d) to* exhaustively.

3. Methodology

3.1 Purpose and Method of the Research

The purpose of this study is to clarify the actual situation of the development of *used to* in the 17th and 18th centuries. In order to do that, the quotation database of *OED2* on CD-ROM has been chosen as a corpus. The target phrase of the present research is *used to*. Thus, all the variants of *use* collocating with *to* within a distance of four words are searched for, and a manual post-edit extracts only the relevant instances. Note that in this research, the construction *be used to*, which expresses a similar sense, is excluded.

3.2 The *OED* as a Corpus

The project of making the dictionary began in 1857 but it was not until 1854 that the first fascicle was to be published. Regular publication continued until the compilation of the first edition was completed in ten volumes in 1928. In 1989, the second edition was published in twenty volumes, and the editors have now started to compile the third edition from headwords which begin with the letter *M*. According to Hoffmann (2004: 18), a CD-ROM version of the first edition was released in 1987, so that the users obtained unprecedented access to a wealth of information about the English language. He further

explains that "[t]he second edition of the *OED* became available on CD-ROM in 1992, thereby extending the electronically accessible data to cover the complete history of the English language from its earliest extant texts until well into the second half of the twentieth century".

Although the *OED* is generally considered to be the world's most comprehensive dictionary of the English language, arguments would rage if we consider it as a corpus, because there is a general idea among scholars that corpora should be "structured and balanced collections of texts compiled for linguistic analysis" (Mair 2004: 123). In this respect, the *OED* has some disadvantages when used as a corpus. We are, for example, not able to focus on any specific genre, style, register nor variety. Mair explains characteristics of the *OED* as follows:

> Rather than deal with connected passages of text, the "corpus" supplies pairs of adjacent sentences, more or less abridged sentences (the regular case), or even syntactic fragments. Many quotations turn up in several entries, and not always in identical form. Not all periods in the history of the language are covered evenly, and the editors' decisions as to what type of text should be consulted for quotations are not always in line with what today's linguist would wish for.
>
> If the OED's quotation base is a corpus at all, it is one that rules out many types of inquiry, for example all those in which factors such as text-type specific frequencies play a role in the interpretation of the results. Nor is it possible to investigate macrolinguistic phenomena above the clause level, as the textual input into the corpus is so fragmented. (2004: 123-124)

These hindrances are not surprising because the *OED* was not designed as a corpus but as a dictionary. "However", according to Mair (2004: 124), "these drawbacks are offset by one crucial advantage, namely the sheer mass of material". Hoffmann (2004: 18) also argues, "[u]sing the program provided with the CD-ROM, this large database of over 2.4 million quotations can be searched for individual lexical items or phrases and thereby provides computerized access to samples of the English language spanning a period of more than 1,000 years". Unless we fail to take heed of the problems which the *OED* could cause, the largest dictionary of English can be seen as a corpus which contains an incomparably greater amount of information than any other databases of the language.

4. Result and Analysis

4.1 Overall Distributions

The count of the present form includes *use*, *uses*, *useth*, *usest*, *vse*, *vses* and *vseth*. *Used*, *us'd*, *vsed* and *vs'd* were found as the past and past participle forms. *Did … use to* and the other variants of *use* with *did* were counted as the past form. All of the four quotations with the present participle form are shown in (6a-d), and (7), which is included in the past form, also deserves attention because *would* and *use to* are used pleonastically to express a habitual action in the past.

(6) (a) Nero Cæsar,... vsing (as he did) to be a night-walker,..met otherwhiles with those that would so beat him. (1601 Holland, *Pliny* I. 400 qtd. in *OED2*, "night-walker", Def. 1.).

(b) The good hus-wife must be careful when the line is growne, to free it from being intangled with the weed using to wind about it which

of some is called line gout. (1616 Surfl. & Markh., *Country Farme* 568 qtd. in *OED2,* “line n.”, Def. 4.).

(c) Yea, his Lordships very Grayhound, likewise vsing to waite at his stirrop, was shot through the body. (1617 Moryson, *Itin.* ii. 49 qtd. in *OED2,* “wait v.”, Def. 9a.).

(d) Cardinall Allan an Englishman, having used to persecute the English… had changed his mind, since the English had overthrowne the Spanish Navy. (1617 Moryson, *Itin.* i. 121 qtd. in *OED2,* “mind n.”, Def. 12.).

(7) The Ale-wives of Huntingdon… when they saw him coming would use to cry out to one another, shut up your Dores. (1663 *Flagel., O. Cromwell* [1672] 17 qtd. in *OED2,* “ale-wife 1”).

The result of the research is shown in Table 1. Although absolute frequency is useful by itself for comparison within each period, the raw data should be normalised by the total number of the citations for each period in *OED2* in order to make possible the comparison of each form between the periods. Thus, the relative frequencies per 10,000 quotations are shown in Table 2. The normalised frequencies of the present and past forms are also graphed out with that of all the inflected forms in Figure 1.

The data indicate a gradual decline of the present form in the 17th century and, after that period, the frequency falls sharply. However, it by no means dies out during the period of the present research, which is consistent with *OED3*’s (“use v.”, Def. 21a.) observation that the present form was “[o]bsolete in standard British and American English by the 19th century”. The frequency of the past form, on the other hand, shows a rise, mainly from the last quarter of the 17th century to the first quarter of

the 18th century. It also outstrips the present form at the turn of the century. A slight decline in the latter half of the 18th century might hint at a further diminution in the following period, although this question is not

Table 1. Raw Frequencies of *Use(d) to* for Eight Quarter Centuries from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

	present	past	perfect	pluperfect	pres. part.	total
1601-1625	127	67	9	3	4	210
1626-1650	100	54	4	3	0	161
1651-1675	81	40	1	1	0	123
1676-1700	73	54	2	0	0	129
1701-1725	18	88	1	0	0	107
1726-1750	12	73	1	0	0	86
1751-1775	6	64	0	1	0	71
1776-1800	3	86	0	0	0	89

Table 2. Normalised Frequencies per 10,000 Citations of *Use(d) to* for Eight Quarter Centuries from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

	present	past	perfect	pluperfect	pres. part.	total
1601-1625	10.74	5.66	0.76	0.25	0.34	17.75
1626-1650	11.66	6.29	0.47	0.35	0.00	18.77
1651-1675	8.10	3.90	0.10	0.10	0.00	12.20
1676-1700	9.22	6.82	0.25	0.00	0.00	16.29
1701-1725	2.45	12.00	0.14	0.00	0.00	14.59
1726-1750	2.12	12.92	0.18	0.00	0.00	15.22
1751-1775	0.92	9.86	0.00	0.15	0.00	10.94
1776-1800	0.51	10.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.39

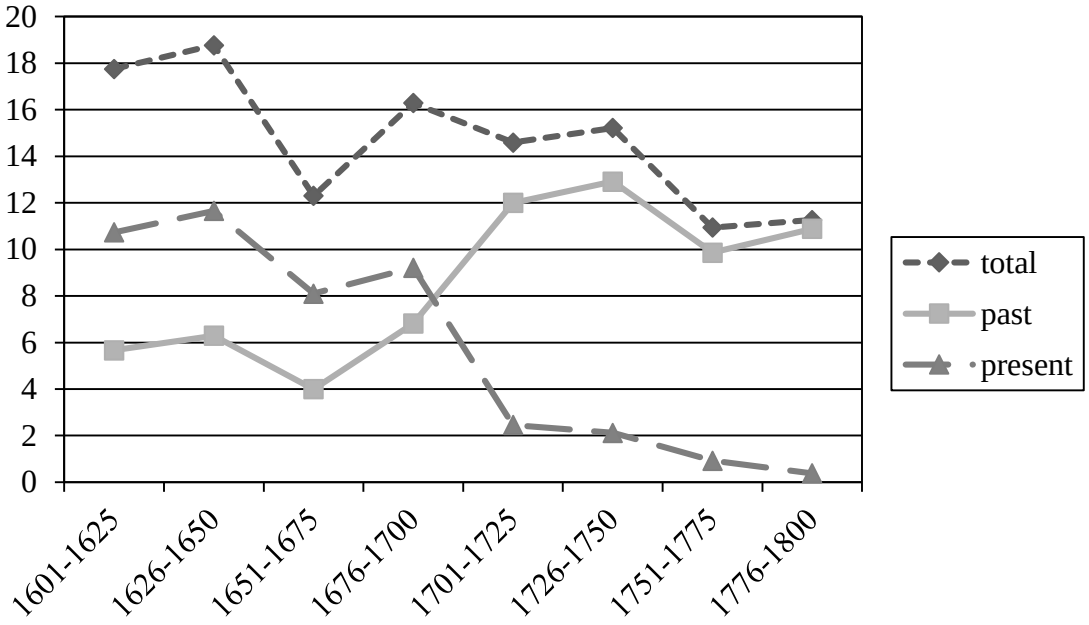

Figure 1. *Use(d) to* - per 10,000 Citations from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

dealt with in the present paper. The perfect form, which *OED3* ("use v.", Def. 21c. [a]) says was common in the 16th and 17th centuries, clearly decreases in the 17th century and no instance has been found in the second half of the 18th century. The pluperfect form is somewhat complicated. No quotation but for (8b) exists later than 1662, shown in (8a).

(8) (a) The Hevedinges of Spalding, on Westone Side, had used and ought to be whole, but then were cut through in divers places. (1662 Dugdale *Hist. Imbanking* xlv. 234/1 qtd. in *OED2,* "heading vbl. n.", Def. II. 10.).

(b) O! had he chose some other game, Or shot as he had used to do! (1753 Jago *Elegy on Blackbird* in *Adventurer* No. 37 qtd. in *OED2*, "shoot v.", Def. III. 22a.).

All the instances of the present participle form, shown in (6a-d) above, are from the first quarter of the 17th century. It may safely be said that the present participle form of *use* in the habitual sense was rooted out in the 17th century. The total frequency gradually drops off with the exception at the period 1651-1675. In that period, all the forms including the past form decline for no conclusive reason.

Table 3. *Use(d) to* - per cent of All Instances from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

	present	past
1601-1625	60.5	31.9
1626-1650	62.1	33.5
1651-1675	65.9	32.5
1676-1700	56.6	41.9
1701-1725	16.8	82.2
1726-1750	14.0	84.9
1751-1775	8.5	90.1
1776-1800	3.4	96.6

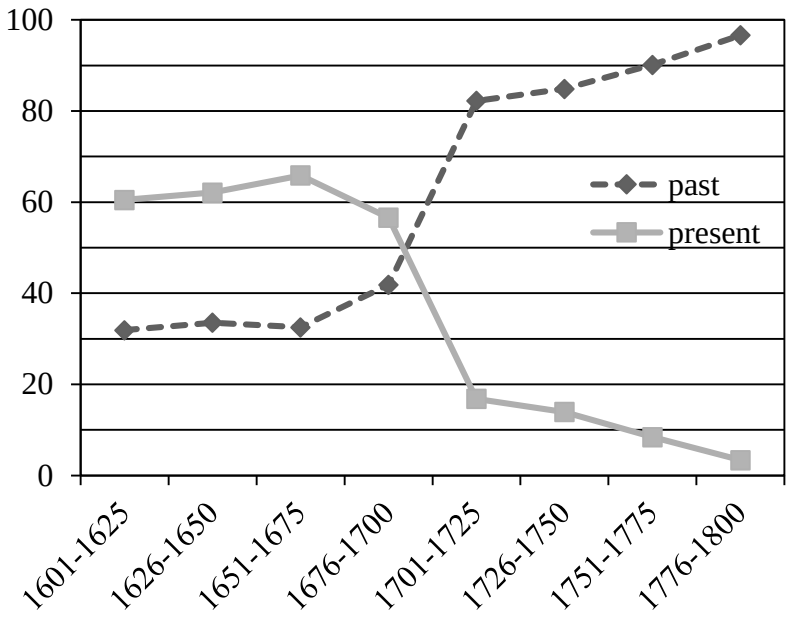

Figure 2. *Use(d) to* - per cent of All Instances from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

Because of the decline in the whole frequency, the process of the grammaiticalisation is blurred to some extent. Thus, in order to observe it more accurately, the absolute figures have been converted to percentages of the total use in Table 3 and Figure 2. Both of the present and past forms are stable until the third quarter of the 17th century. However, a trend of the

change of dominant usage has already started in the last quarter of the 17th century, when either of the tenses increases in normalised frequency. After the drastic alternation at the turn of the century, these two forms continue to slowly move in opposite directions. In spite of the drop-off of the past form in the latter half of the 18th century in normalised frequency, the grammaticalisation seems to be in progress.

4.2 The Auxiliary *do*

As Trudgill and Hannah (1982: 60) explain, there are two ways of making negative and interrogative sentences with *use(d) to*: one is to treat the verb as an auxiliary, which functions as an operator, and the other, as a lexical verb, which receives DO-support. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, there is not much difference between *do*- and operator-construction in the present study. Although Declerck (1991: 418), Quirk *et al.* (1985: 140) and Denison (1998: 197) claim that *never* is sometimes employed as a good alternative to avoid the problem of negating *use(d) to* in Present-day English, *never* is not a common way out of the uncertainty of the speaker in this period. Moreover, it is doubtful whether such an uncertainty existed, at least in the Early Modern English period, in which, for all lexical verbs, "interrogative and negative sentences can be formed either with or without *do*, and *do* can be inserted in an affirmative declarative sentence without giving sentence emphasis" (Barber 1976: 263).

Barber (1976: 265) observes that "[i]n the first half of the 16th century, the use of [the] auxiliary *do* is a mark of the literary rather than the colloquial style". As far as the present research is concerned, this tendency still seems to be retained even a century later, as in (9). However, all the negative sentences with DO-support from the 18th century but (10e) undoubtedly sound colloquial or informal, as shown in (10a-d).

Table 4. Raw Frequencies of the Present Form of *Use(d) to* with DO-support and in Operator-construction from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

	present			
	affirmative	negative		
	DO-support	DO-support	operator	*never*
1601-1625	8	1	3	1
1626-1650	7	2	1	2
1651-1675	0	1	3	1
1676-1700	3	2	2	0
1701-1725	0	1	0	0
1726-1750	0	0	2	0
1751-1775	0	1	0	0
1776-1800	0	0	0	0

Table 5. Raw Frequencies of the Past Form of *Use(d) to* with DO-support and in Operator-construction from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

	past			
	affirmative	negative		
	DO-support	DO-support	operator	*never*
1601-1625	7	0	0	0
1626-1650	3	2	0	0
1651-1675	2	0	0	0
1676-1700	2	1	0	0
1701-1725	0	1	1	1
1726-1750	1	0	0	1
1751-1775	0	0	0	0
1776-1800	0	2	0	0

(9) Dionysius the Abbot… brought in the Æra of Christ's Incarnation, so that… the Christians did not use to reckon by the years of Christ, until the 532 of the Incarnation. (a1646 J. Gregory, *Learned Tracts* [1649] 164 qtd. in *OED2*, "era", Def. 1.).

(10) (a) You did not use to write in Post-Hast. (1709 Hearne, *Collect.* 13 Mar. [O.H.S.] II. 176 qtd. in *OED2*, "post-haste n., adv., and a.", Def. A.).

(b) Shall I give it you in plain English? You don't use to mince it. (1754 Richardson, *Grandison* III. vii. 112 qtd. in *OED2*, "mince v.", Def. 4d.).

(c) 'Dad', (said the glassman… pulling out his pocket-handkerchief) 'I didn't used to be so melch-hearted.' (1782 E. N. Blower, *Geo. Bateman* II. 111 qtd. in *OED2*, "melsh, melch a.").

(d) Alas! his absence… did not use thus to affect me! (1778 *Hist. Eliza Warwick* I. 260, qtd. in *OED2*, "use v.", Def. 21b.).

(e) Defamation does not use to stop at manifest, no, nor at suspected Vice. (1706 Stanhope *Paraphr.* III. 495 qtd. in *OED2*, "suspected, ppl. a.", Def. 2.).

Although Barber (1976: 264) maintains that the "auxiliary *do* in affirmative declarative sentences was normally unemphatic", in order to confirm his idea with the instances of the present research, additional context should be given. However, his statement that by 1700, the auxiliary *do* had become almost out of use except for emphasis (Barber 1976: 265) seems to be the case with *use(d) to*.

As for interrogatives, only three inverted sentences, shown in (11a-c), have been attested, two of which co-occur with an exclamation mark. As

with Present-day English, in which the irresolute behaviour of *use(d) to* makes itself generally rare in negative sentences and very rare in questions (Biber *et al*. 1999: 244, 254), the total number of the negative and interrogative constructions is quite low. Hence, it is safe to conclude that the low frequency of *use(d) to* in negative and interrogative sentences in Present-day English is already the case in the 17th and 18th centuries and is not just due to the uncertainty of how to make these constructions. A more adequate account would attribute this tendency to semantic or other factors.

(11) (a) Did the Israelitical people in Ægypt use to eate a lambe raw? (1609 Bible [Douay] *Exod.* xii. Comm. qtd. in *OED2*, "Israelitic a.").

(b) How did he use to hang, till he slabbered again, poor doting old man! (1748 Richardson *Clarissa* [1811] I. xlii. 322 qtd. in *OED2*, "slabber v.", Def. 4.).

(c) How did we all use to admire her! (1767 *Woman of Fashion* II. 26 qtd. in *OED2*, "use v.", Def. 21a. α.).

4.3 Type of Subject

As the last analysis of the present study, type of subject deserves great attention. Since *use(d) to* originally means 'be accustomed', the major type of subject is living beings. However, in the process of the development into a marginal auxiliary, it can be also assumed to take inanimate things as its subject.

Indeed, in the present research, inanimate subject has been occasionally attested as in (12). The expletive *there*, and even *here* has been found as in (13a-b). In (14a), *the Sun* is treated as if it were a man. (14b) is

also ambiguous because it is the members of the committee that are actually consulted. In Table 6, instances whose subject is undoubtedly the expletive *there* or inanimate things are counted and tabulated.

Table 6. Raw Frequencies of Inanimate Subject and *There*-constructoin with *Use(d) to* in the Present and Past Tense, and Their Percentages to All Instances of *Use(d) to* from 1601 to 1800 in *OED2*

	present			past		
	inanimate	*there*	percentage	inanimate	*there*	percentage
1601-1625	9	1	7.9	4	0	6.0
1626-1650	10	0	10.0	6	0	11.1
1651-1675	10	1	13.6	5	1	15.4
1676-1700	6	0	8.2	6	1	13.0
1701-1725	4	0	22.2	8	0	9.1
1726-1750	5	0	41.7	7	0	9.6
1751-1775	0	0	0.0	7	2	14.1
1776-1800	0	0	0.0	14	1	17.4

(12) This needle and semicircle would be covered with some glasse and slude, as dials use to be covered. (1613 M. Ridley *Magn. Bodies* 45 qtd. in *OED2*, "slude").

(13) (a) There vseth to be more trepidacion in Courtes vponn the breaking out of troubles then were fitt. (1607-12 Bacon, *Ess… Of Seditions & Troub.* [Arb.] 414 qtd. in *OED2*, "douse v.", Def. 1.).

(b) Here used to be a wake on the Sunday after All-Saints-day. (1778 *Eng. Gazetteer* [ed. 2] s.v. *Stretton* qtd. in *OED2*, "wake n.", Def. 4b.).

(14) (a) To have heard the great noise the Sun used to make… when he doused his head in the Ocean. (1662 Stillingfl. *Orig. Sacr.* i. iv. §11 qtd. in *OED2,* "douse v.", Def. 1.).

(b) That Committee of the Council which used to be consulted in secret affairs. (1646-7 Clarendon *Hist. Reb.* [1702] I. ii. §61 qtd. in *OED2,* "cabinet n.", Def. II. 8a.).

As already mentioned above, *OED2* ("*use v.*", Def. 21b.) observes that *use(d) to* was frequently predicated of things from about 1620 to about 1675. This statement seems to be the case for both the present and the past, and after that period, both of the forms decrease in percentage. The proportion of inanimate things in the past form rises towards the end of the 18th century. A probable explanation is that rise in the total frequency of the past form at the turn of the 18th century partly accelerates its extension of usage.

The present form fluctuates wildly during the 18th century perhaps because the total amount of the present is not large enough to carry out a statistical analysis. However, it is noteworthy that until the end of the 17th century, in which the present form itself took the first step towards its disuse, both of the present and the past forms show the same tendency. It also deserves to be pointed out that in spite of the decline in total use in the latter half of the 18th century, the percentage of the examples of the past form which take an inanimate subject goes up. Based on these facts, it is concluded that in the period of the present study, while the past form made steady progress towards the category of marginal auxiliary in Present-day English, the present form was also in the progress of grammaticalisation at least until it was obsolescent and came to be out of use.

5 Conclusion

In the present study, the development of *use(d) to* in the 17th and 18th centuries was explored through the quotation database of *OED2* on CD-ROM. The present form is more frequent than the past form in the 17th century. However, at the dawn of the 18th century, the tables are turned, and the past skyrockets in proportion, while the present nosedives. In spite of the decline of the past form in the second half of the 18th century in normalised frequency, the grammaticalisation of *use(d) to* towards the past habitual marker is in progress, although the present form does not die out even at the end of the 18th century.

As with other lexical verbs, the unemphatic *do* in affirmative sentences comes to be out of use by 1700, and negative and interrogative constructions are infrequent even at the beginning of the 17th century, in which the insertion or omission of the auxiliary *do* is still optional. A more reasonable account than speakers' uncertainty of how to make negative and interrogative sentences is needed for the infrequency of these constructions.

As for the type of subject, inanimate subjects become frequent once towards the period 1651-1675. After the decline at the turn of the century, the proportion of the inanimate subject in the past tense rises through the 18th century probably due to the steep increment of the total frequency at the turn of the 18th century. It is also worth noting that the present form develops in the same way as the past form until the end of the 17th century, in which the present is still the dominant form.

As discussed above in Section 3.2, it is sometimes disputable to use the *OED* as a corpus. Although this problem might result in the somewhat irregular pattern of development of *use(d) to* in the present research, its contribution is not small at all. The conclusion of the present research, then, is that the

grammaticalisation of *use(d) to* into the iterative aspect marker is under way in both the present and the past tense at least up to the close of the 17th century. For some irresistible force, the present form is obsolescent during the 18th century and comes into disuse after the period of the present research, but the past form makes steady advance towards a marginal auxiliary.

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